



Maricopa County
Animal Care and Control

BRINGING HOME NEW KITTEN



Bringing home a new kitten is truly one of life's joys. Thoughtful pre-kitten preparations and a well planned first 24 hours can give your fuzzy bundle of joy a head start and make your dreams of the perfect family cat come true.

BEFORE THE BIG DAY

Hold a household meeting to decide that everyone wants a kitten. Discuss age, breed, and where to get the cat.

You also should:

CREATE A SCHEDULE

- Who will be in charge of feedings?
- Who will make veterinary appointments?
- Who will brush and groom?
- Who will help cat learn to use scratching post?
- Who will clean up accidents and spills?

CREATE A SHOPPING LIST OF SUPPLIES

- Food and water bowls
- Toys (balls and dangling toys)
- Brush or comb
- Bedding
- Collar, identification tag
- Litter box and litter

KITTEN-PROOF THE HOUSE

- Tape electrical cords to baseboards.
- Store household chemicals on high shelves.
- Remove plants, and breakables.
- Set up the bed and litter box.

If you have children, hold one last meeting to lay down the rules: Don't overwhelm the kitten the first day, and don't fight over her or create mob scenes showing him to the neighborhood.

ONCE KITTEN IS HOME

- Show her the litter box and where her food is.
- Start your schedule for feeding, napping and play/exercise.
- Be sure to give the kitten lots of family time.
- Give the kitten positive attention for good behavior, such as playing with toys and using scratching post.

PLAY AND DEVELOPMENT

Play is important for kittens because it increases their physical coordination, social skills and learning limits. By interacting with their mother and littermates kittens learn "how to be a cat," as well as explore the ranking process ("who's in charge").

For more information on animal care, behavior or MCACC programs, contact
(602) 506-PETS or visit pets.maricopa.gov
Adapted with permission from Denver Dumb Friends League.

Well-socialized cats are more likely to have well-socialized kittens. Kittens “feed” off of their mothers’ calm or fearful attitude toward people. It is important to build “people-skills” in your kitten from an early stage. Along with feedings, pet them, play with them and talk to them daily.

Cats are normally adoptable after they reach two pounds, which is about 2 months old. They are very active at this stage:

- Most learning is by observation, preferably from their mother.
- Social play includes belly-ups, hugging, ambushing and licking.
- Object play includes scooping, tossing, pawing, mouthing, and holding.
- Social/object play includes tail chasing, pouncing, leaping and dancing.

WHAT THEY NEED FROM YOU:

- A lot of handling, including active play. All play should be with objects, not parts of your body. Encourage play with dangling toys and balls (ping pong balls are the perfect size and weight).
- If orphaned, also encourage play with small stuffed toys (kitten-sized) — loose on the floor for free wrestling and in your hand for controlled opportunities to realize when biting is too hard.

When your kitten is 3—6 months, they are in their ranking period. They are most influenced by their litter” (playmates now include companions of other species). They are beginning to see and use ranking (dominant and submissive) within the household, including humans.

WHAT THEY NEED FROM YOU:

- Continued handling and talking.
- Interactive object play.
- Gentle reminders that people parts are not toys.
- Encourage hide and seek games with objects — toy inside paper bag, etc. — and lots of exercise (climbing, running after tossed balls, etc.).

When your kitten reaches 6 months old, she has reached adolescence. She has a heightened exploration of dominance, including challenging humans (teenagers are teenagers, no matter what species!).

WHAT THEY NEED FROM YOU:

- To be spayed or neutered, if not already done.
- Continued handling and interactive play, with plenty of opportunities for independent object play, as well.
- To be part of a family as an indoor pet.
- Lots of love!

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